

COVID-19 Breastfeeding and vaccination



Breastfeeding is important for mum and bub. Breastfeeding has many health benefits, and helps mum and bub to develop a strong loving connection to each other. Breastfeeding continues to offer benefits, even if Mum has COVID-19 or is having her COVID-19 vaccine.

I am breastfeeding, can I be vaccinated?

If you were not vaccinated, or did not have all doses of the COVID-19 vaccine in pregnancy, you can still be vaccinated whilst breastfeeding. There is no need to stop breastfeeding prior to, or after the vaccine. It is possible that your antibodies created by the vaccination are passed on to bub through your breastmilk, offering bub some protection as well. Yarn with your doctor or other health care provider about getting the COVID-19 vaccination when breastfeeding.

I have COVID-19 and I am breastfeeding

You can continue breastfeeding if you feel well enough to do so. There is no evidence to suggest that COVID-19 is passed on through breastmilk. There are many health benefits from breastfeeding, including your breastmilk containing antibodies that may help bub fight COVID-19 if they become unwell.

There are some things you can do to reduce the chance of passing COVID-19 onto bub:

- Ensure you wash your hands regularly using soap and water, or hand sanitiser. Wash your hands before and after touching bub.
- Routinely clean surfaces you have touched.
- Wear a mask when in close contact with baby, including when breastfeeding.
- Have another adult support you with caring for bub, if able.

I am too unwell to breastfeed bub, or bub is being cared for by family

Depending on how you are feeling, you can express if you want to. This will help with breastfeeding once you are better, and it will ensure bub has breastmilk available. If you can express, make sure you have washed your hands and any equipment before and after expressing, and store milk correctly.

How do I store expressed breastmilk?

You can store freshly expressed breastmilk in a clean and closed container, such as a bottle or breastmilk storage bag. Always remember to put the date you expressed on the container so that you know how long you have stored it for. If you would like to add two batches of expressed milk together, remember to ensure both have been chilled in the fridge before mixing together in the same container. Use the expressing date of older milk first.

Freshly expressed breastmilk

You can store breastmilk:

- at room temperature (26°C or lower) for 6-8 hours
- in the fridge (4°C or lower) for up to 72 hours – the best spot is the back of the fridge where it's coldest

- in the freezer compartment (-15°C or lower) inside a fridge for two weeks
- in the freezer section (-18°C or lower) of a fridge with separate door for three months
- in a chest or upright deep freezer (-20°C or lower) for 6-12 months.

Previously frozen breastmilk (thawed in the fridge but not warmed)

You can store breastmilk:

- at room temperature (26°C or lower) for four hours or less – that is, until the next feed
- in the fridge for up to 24 hours – the best spot is the back of the fridge where it's coldest.

Do not refreeze previously frozen breastmilk.

Breastmilk thawed outside the fridge in warm water

You can store breastmilk:

- at room temperature (26°C or lower) use once thawed, and until the end of the feed
- place in the fridge for four hours, or until the next feed.
- Do not refreeze previously frozen breastmilk.
- If bub starts feed, any milk left over at the end of the feed needs to be thrown away.

I still have questions, what should I do?

It is normal to still have questions and feel unsure. Don't feel shame to speak up for yourself and your family, and ask questions. If you would like more information please talk to your Doctor, Midwife or other health care provider.

You can also call 13HEALTH (13 43 25 84) and ask to speak to an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Nurse to yarn about your concerns.

You can also find useful information on the following websites

- Make the choice COVID-19 vaccine information : For communities
- Consumer information: COVID-19 and pregnancy (health.qld.gov.au)
- Where to get help: Get COVID-Ready | Health and wellbeing | Queensland Government (www.qld.gov.au)
- COVID-19 | Australian Breastfeeding Association
- <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/question-and-answers-hub/q-a-detail/coronavirus-disease-covid-19-breastfeeding>
- Expressing breastmilk & storing breastmilk | Raising Children Network
- Expressing and storing breastmilk | Australian Breastfeeding Association